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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

PROVINCE'S LIBRARIES HELP BOOST FAMILY LITERACY

PRINCE GEORGE – Libraries across B.C. are celebrating Family Literacy Day today with events that promote the importance of reading as a family, announced Education Minister Shirley Bond.

"Libraries are a cornerstone of government's new ReadNow BC literacy action plan," Bond said prior to taking part in a family storytime at her local library. "Libraries offer a range of programs and services in 240 branches around B.C. They are fundamental to helping ensure we have British Columbians who have the reading skills to be successful in today's society."

Libraries have scheduled a variety of events to mark Family Literacy Day, including a Write On! event with students and authors in downtown Vancouver, prize giveaways in libraries across Vancouver Island and special storytelling times from Prince George to Victoria.

To support local libraries and increase library access for all British Columbians, the Province this year has provided $4.25 million for BC OneCard and AskAway, a virtual reference service.

The BC OneCard program allows library patrons who may belong to smaller libraries with fewer resources to access services at any library in the province – large or small. Patrons with a BC OneCard can also borrow a book from any library in the province, and return it at their local library.

The AskAway virtual reference service expands equal access to high-quality knowledge by making a trained reference librarian available live, on the web, to anyone in British Columbia.

"Public libraries are centres of reading for communities and are constantly working to build the literacy level of British Columbia," said Lawrence Lavender, president of the British Columbia Library Trustees' Association. "Since the Province's 2004 Strategic Plan for Libraries, provincial partnership has brought a number of innovative programs and initiatives that are making a big difference for libraries and communities across B.C."

These library programs support the ReadNow BC literacy plan. The $27-million first phase of the plan was announced yesterday at the Premier's Literacy Summit. ReadNow BC is helping British Columbians develop better literacy skills by providing reading readiness funding for Strong Start early learning centres and the Ready, Set, Learn kindergarten readiness program. ReadNow BC builds on the Province's existing investments in literacy.

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The Province is committed to reaching its goal of making B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. Since 2001, more than $92 million has been invested in new literacy programs and services, including $15.6 million for public libraries, $4.7 million for adult literacy and $10 million for textbooks.

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1 factsheet(s) attached.

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FACTSHEET

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FAMILY LITERACY DAY CELEBRATIONS AT B.C. LIBRARIES

Campbell River	Library is launching literacy kits at the Campbell River Community Centre
Chemainus, Cowichan Lake, Cumberland, Gold River, Port Hardy, Port McNeill libraries	Family Literacy Day prize giveaways, draws at 4 p.m.
Coquitlam	"Books for BC Babies" to be launched for the Tri-Cities at Coquitlam Centre Mall, 10 a.m.-noon
Courtenay	Library welcome for young children at 10:15 a.m., and a family storytime drop-in at 2 p.m. for children five and over
Cowichan - Duncan	Family Day storytime, 2 p.m.
Nanaimo	Family storytime with refreshments and prize draw, 2 p.m.
North Vancouver - Lynn Valley	Families that bring in a "library log" of their week's reading will be given a book prize.
Parksville	"Family Fun - Reading for Everyone!" events – storytime and snacks, 10:30 a.m.; family scavenger hunt, all day
Port Alberni	Drop-in storytime, 11 a.m.
Prince George	Minster Shirley Bond reads with D.S., The Reading Snake, 2 p.m.
Richmond	Various Literacy Day celebrations at the library's Brighouse Branch, all day, library staff in costume.
Salmo	Family Literacy Day celebration, including storytelling, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sidney	Family Literacy Day open house (games, spelling bee) 10:30 a.m. - noon
Sooke	Storytime for children three – six years old, 11-11:30 a.m.
Surrey	"Surrey Reads" literacy awareness fair at the Guildford Mall (Centre Court), noon – 4 p.m.; sing-a-long with Tony Prophet, 1:30 p.m.
Tumbler Ridge	Various Family Literacy Day events, 10:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Vancouver - Central Branch	Write On! - Literacy activities for children five - 12 accompanied by their parents and/or teachers, 12:30 – 3:30 pm, Cantonese storytime in afternoon
Victoria downtown	Presentation and storytime, 12:30 – 2 p.m.

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